

In an excellent documentary of the Olympic Games, I saw an interview of an athlete from the Soviet Union who talked about his great surprise and disappointment with the short duration of the sporting activity of the Olympic participants. How can we admit in the era of the science of sports this unforgiveable lack of care for the physical longevity of the sportsmen? Is it possible that our knowledge about the physiology of effort serves only to illustrate our scientific papers? It is a pity that we put victory above the physical wholeness of our athletes in a flagrant disrespect for the preservation of their health. We must never permit a thing like this to happen nowadays; the availability of modern equipment in efficient human performance laboratories studying the physiology of effort, and the technical processes of pulse evaluation done on the spot in the competition sites, offer an excellent basis for the correct guidance of our task. The modern techniques of the physiology of effort show with reasonable precision that the harmony of the heartbeats of the athlete with his training, is the big secret for his sporting longevity.

We should however take into consideration his biological individuality; because during training, the best physical endurance of one athlete generally does not coincide with that of another. That is why the principle of biological individualization is a very important factor to the work done. The necessity of checking the pulse during training, the simplicity of the method, taking into account the self-evaluation by the athlete himself, motivates the interest of knowing the progressive results of his own physical endurance. This information so simply acquired can make the athlete feel a greater self motivation by its constant use, and to not complicate the trainer's task.

For instance: if an athlete has 60 beats per minute while resting, we should raise this to 180 bpm, next decrease it to 120 bpm and raise it again to 180 bpm, and so on. One can consider that the heart muscle works in the best way when it beats two or three times faster than during rest. This is the correct formula for the solution of this problem; as the training consists of diminishing heart frequency, thus supplying a better organic performance, and considerably increasing the sporting lifetime of the athlete.

Now if we have these resources offered by modern sports science, how can we understand the present limitation of the activity of the Olympic athlete, without accepting the lack of care for his biological condition, in a criminal preference for a work of unlimited intensity that can lead him to make the records? Could this be the only way? Frankly I don't think so. If we have the resources, scientifically proven, for prolonging the sporting career of athletes, we should put them into practice as soon as possible, in order to preserve the human species from the inconsequent attitude of disrespect for the fellowmen in search of his personal self-assertion.

Yours faithfully,

P. P. A. de OLIVEIRA

Some of the material in this letter was presented and discussed at the XXI World Congress of Sports Medicine in Brazilia in September 1978, and raises the points that are of interest to doctors interested in sport in this country as well

Editor

CORRESPONDENCE

The Sports Council,
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To the Editor:

Dear Sir,

COUNCIL OF EUROPE REGISTER OF SPORTS RESEARCH

The Sports Council is administering the UK part of the Council of Europe exercise to produce the second register of sports research. In this connection, I should be very grateful if you would ask members of the BASM to contact me if they have been involved in any research projects which started at any time since 1 January, 1977 so that I may obtain the details required by the Council of Europe..

Thank you very much for your help.

Yours faithfully,

G. ARROWSMITH
Research Officer